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sarily exist in the mind of the native. More specifically our subjects are the beliefs concerning what may loosely be called the spirits of the living and the spirits of the dead. Out of the confused mass of evidence we may extricate two propositions, and set them down definitely as a groundwork. (1) Of every creature and thing there is a 'spirit' or immaterial counterpart called *asisi*. (2) Every human being survives death, and the entity which thus survives, whatever its form, is called a *sovai*.[1] These two propositions are matters respectively of native philosophy and religion. We shall continue here to discuss the first, and shall reserve the second until the next chapter.

The Meanings of Asisi

The word *asisi*[2] is, I believe, in general use. One hesitates to lay down its literal meaning, but it is used for 'shadow', and for 'reflection', and these are the simplest of its meanings and probably fundamental. There is thus far no psychic implication in the word. Shadows and reflections are ordinary phenomena to the Orokaiva, which he observes and accepts without beating his brains for an explanation. But there are other manifestations which take a rather more psychic turn. Such are the appearance of human and other beings in dreams and visions, and to these the name *asisi* is extended without, of course, implying that they are identical with shadow or reflection. In this connexion *asisi* stands for the immaterial counterpart which is visible. In so far as the native bothers to form a theory of dreams (*etuve*), he says that in his sleep he may be visited by *asisi*, or, on the other hand, that his own *asisi* may travel.[3] It is not necessary to give examples of dreams, but merely to repeat that in them the *asisi* is regarded as the immaterial but visible counterpart of the person or thing dreamt of.

But when, in the native's dream theory, the *asisi* of the

[1] For other dialectal forms see p. 267.

[2] In the 'Taro Cult' (Report No. 6 in *Orokaiva Magic*), which dealt with a movement originating among the Binandele, the Binandele form *atiti* was used throughout. *Asisi*, in accordance with the rule adopted in this book, is the Aiga form.

[3] It is also said that a man's *eye* travels as he dreams, though there is, of course, no notion of a material eye-ball passing through the air.

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dreamer travels, it is not necessarily implied that it is visible, and this brings us to another meaning of the word, and necessitates a widening of definition. We may say that the *asisi* is an immaterial entity, not necessarily visualized, but identified with, or acting as substitute for, some person, in this case the dreamer. Thus when Dasiga, the visionary of Manau,[1] received his commandments, it was his *asisi* that went up into the sky and saw God, and such a use of the word is not due to any external suggestion, as, e.g. of Christianity, but is typical of Orokaiva usage. Dasiga does not have a cut-and-dried theory for a 'soul' which leaves his body for the time being as a mere inanimate clod while it travels the skies; he believes that he himself ascended in immaterial form. His *asisi* is merely a substitute for himself in Dasiga's own mind; for he has never thrashed the matter out and formulated a definite theory of body, soul, and spirit. Such a conception is not limited in reference to human beings. Animals and inanimate objects may also have their *asisi*. When, for instance, a hunting magician feels a certain sensation in his right side, 'like the kicking of an unborn puppy in its mother's belly', he says that it is the *asisi* of a pig which has entered him. We must not press him too closely for a definition of the form of *asisi*. He has not thought this out and he cannot explain. He thinks that the pig has come to him in some form or other, altogether immaterial unless it be for that slight throbbing in his side. Again, when a mourner declares that the *asisi* of the dead is immanent in the mourning jacket of *baja* (Job's Tears), he has no definite idea of how it got there or of what form it takes, except that it is obviously both immaterial and invisible.

The best example of the reference of *asisi* to inanimate nature is found in the doctrines of the Taro Cult, whose originators were possessed by the *asisi* of the *ba*, or taro, itself. And it is instructive to note, as illustrating the confused conception of the form of the *asisi*, that the originator of the cult saw the spirits of the actual taro plants in the shape of young men who danced before him.

[1] See 'Taro Cult' in *Orokaiva Magic*, pp. 74 ff.

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In short, we see that *asisi* is a loose word covering a variety of conceptions, and we must seek a correspondingly wide definition.

The Asisi as Spiritual Substitute

Now, for the time being, we may dismiss the idea of an *asisi* or 'spirit', and view certain native beliefs apart from any ulterior, i.e. spiritual, explanation. It would, then, seem as if the native believed that persons and things could on occasion act, exist, or be present to consciousness in a manner independently of their concrete selves. To take the last of the above-mentioned examples, for instance, it would seem that in native belief the taro plant could influence the human being although he had no contact whatever with the actual vegetable.

For this proposition in general there is a mass of evidence —dream appearances, trance journeys, spirit possession, the action of charms and medicines, &c., all of which are familiar to anthropology. A few concrete examples from the Orokaiva, however, may be added. A man has eaten sugar-cane, which is for some reason unwholesome or harmful. So long as the wind does not blow he is comfortable, but when it rises and sways the sugar-cane in the garden it sets up a synchronous disturbance in the victim's stomach and makes him ill. Again a man attributes his cold in the nose to the numerous unripe bread-fruit. Why? According to his own explanation they are as yet of a watery consistency, and so by their mere presence make him rheumy, inclined to spit and snivel. A youth, having offered a cigarette to his sweetheart, pokes the butt into a nest of ants. The ants bite the cigarette, and the girl is stimulated into loving him. A woman has eaten of a pig whose flesh is for some reason harmful. Her child falls ill and is supposed to have imbibed the cause of its sickness together with its mother's milk. Two women live in parts of the same house. One of them has eaten carpet-snake, cooking it in a pot over the fire. Subsequently the other woman cooks some taro in the ashes of the same fire and gives them to her husband. He falls ill and ascribes his sickness to the unwholesome carpet-snake.

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When Buninia, the originator of the Taro Cult, was preaching his doctrines the people would lean on him, embrace him, and rub their axes and digging sticks over his body, so that the taro which was influencing him should also influence them and their gardens.

Now it is not our business here to determine the real psychological basis of such beliefs (though I cannot imagine that the native looks at every-day things through a haze of mystic potentialities as some psychologists would have it; rather would I adhere to the older idea that he feels there is some physical interaction between things that he associates in his mind). The question is merely that of his own explanation, the scientific worthlessness of which need not concern us.

Now here, as in so many other cases, the native is inclined to take matters for granted. This thing, he feels, has an influence on that thing, or this process over that process; and he does not usually bother his head about an explanation. But when for some reason or other he pauses to think the matter out, what explanation is he to put on it? I believe his stock explanation is that when one thing acts on another, exists, or is present to consciousness, apart from its concrete self, it does so by means of its *asisi*; though, to repeat, this is commonly a forced explanation, for he usually takes the matter simply for granted. It is the *asisi* of the taro plant which enters Buninia and which is in turn passed on to the bodies and the garden implements of those who embrace him; and, if we tax the native hard enough, he will probably tell us that it is the *asisi* of the carpet-snake, which passing in some manner from the pot into the ashes of the fire, and thence through the taro into the body of the man, causes his sickness.

When anything (person, creature, or object) functions, apart from its concrete self, he feels that it does so by means of a second self which is identified with, but for the time being separated from, the concrete. We might call this a spiritual manifestation of the concrete thing, or an immaterial self which co-exists with the material self; but in more general terms it is simply the native's undefined mental

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substitute for the concrete thing. Perhaps the phrase 'spiritual substitute' would make the best definition. Whenever the native thinks of this spiritual substitute in the abstract and feels it necessary to give it a name, he, very naturally and suitably, extends to it the word *asisi*, which means 'shadow' or 'reflection', and thus affords a very close parallel.

Elsewhere, particularly in the Taro Cult, I have translated *asisi* by 'spirit' (as I have translated *sovai* by 'spirit of the dead'). This is only, of course, an approximation, and the word has been used, at the sacrifice of some accuracy, simply to make the subject more readable. That is the only defence I can offer for the use of a term, which in our language is so fluid and ill-defined. And it may be as well to emphasize at this point that some of the accepted implications of 'spirit' do not belong to the concept of an *asisi*. I cannot, for instance, discover from my informants that the *asisi* is regarded as an entity separate from but residing in the body to which it belongs. It is not a 'breath of life', a vital principle, or an animating essence. Such ideas are, I believe, in advance of Orokaiva philosophy as we find it. Accordingly I have avoided the word 'soul' as being rather more unsuitable for a translation than 'spirit'. No informant has ever given me a theory of survival after death other than this, that the *embo be*, 'real man', becomes a *sovai*. At any rate it may be confidently stated that there is no conception of a vital principle or 'soul' which inhabits the body but survives it; and such a meaning cannot be attached to the word *asisi*.

To repeat a conclusion, therefore, the *asisi* is the native's name for a spiritual manifestation of anything; or for an immaterial self which co-exists with but is separable from the concrete self; or, in other words, whenever anything functions apart from its concrete self, it does so by means of a spiritual substitute which is called its *asisi*.

Asisi of the Dead

The word *asisi*, which is thus seen to be of very wide meaning, may stand not only for a manifestation of the living, but also for a manifestation of the dead, i.e. a ghost, visible or invisible. But it must be made clear that in proper

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usage *asisi* is not wholly synonymous with the being that survives death, viz. the *sovai*, though there is some confusion between the two words. Such confusion is largely due to the recent movement known as the Taro Cult which has been dealt with at length in another report.[1] The movement originated on the River Mambare, where its founders believed themselves, or affected to be, possessed by the *asisi* of the actual taro plant. It is not necessary here to describe the ritual, doctrines, and physical manifestations of the cult, but merely to draw attention to the significant change which it has undergone in the course of its dissemination, and the bearing which this change has had on the meaning of the word *asisi*. Near what we may call the dispersion centre of the cult, viz. the neighbourhood of the Mambare mouth, its exponents still affect to be possessed by the taro *asisi*. On the other hand, in the great majority of the whole division through which the cult has spread, its exponents say they are possessed by the spirits of the dead. This is quite in keeping with old belief, and merely indicates that a new and somewhat outlandish cult has relapsed into a form more acceptable to the old-established beliefs of the Orokaiva. But together with other features of ritual the Taro Cult has spread abroad a certain distinctive vocabulary of terms; and among these terms is *asisi*. The consequence is that *asisi* is now frequently used as synonymous with the spirits of the dead by whom the majority of Taro Men think they are possessed. I have been assured by reliable witnesses, however, that this general and regular application of the word *asisi* to the beings who survive death is new-fangled and attributable to the Taro Cult. The old word is *sovai*, which, in the taro jargon, has been supplanted by *asisi*. It is not to be assumed that *asisi* was never used formerly for the spirit of the dead as well as the spirit of the living, but it was not wholly synonymous with the beings who survived death. A fundamental difference exists between the two words. *Asisi* normally stands for an image of or substitute for some other and more concrete reality; whereas a *sovai*, whatever its form, does not represent anything; it exists by itself.

[1] 'Taro Cult' in *Orokaiva Magic*.

4: Chinnery & Haddon E-5 (ca. 1915) 1917
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FIVE NEW RELIGIOUS CULTS IN BRITISH NEW GUINEA.

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I.

E. W. P. CHINNERY.

668 I HAVE recently been engaged in observing the origin of two religous cults known as "Kava-Keva" and "Kekesi." They are animistic practices that, notwithstanding their prohibition, have already become powerful, and extend from the Gira River (8° S. lat.) to Buna Bay.[1]

769 The belief in ghosts and spirits is a predominant characteristic of the northern native. In almost every tribe I 774 have observed the propitiation of family ghosts with individual offerings of food by ordinary persons to secure the vitality of their food supply, and by sorcerers to stimulate [787] their charms. Ghosts are invoked during ceremonies by divination to reveal crimes and criminals. Food offerings to ghosts are made during death feasts and during certain initiation rites. The house of initiation and the paraphernalia of [778] the dance are believed to have spiritual powers, and when the paraphernalia are thrown into the river at the completion of the rites, they are invoked to smite the enemies of the dancers.

776 Yet, although the spirits and ghosts are legion, I had 669 nowhere come across any conception of a supreme spirit until 178 the outbreak of the Kava-Keva[2] movement, when the villages

[131] [1] It may be well to note that the Gira River opens at about 8° S. lat. on the north coast of British New Guinea, and that the mouth of the Mamba River is four miles to the south, both being in the Mambare Division. Buna is on the south of Holnicote (Gona) Bay, about 8° 37′ S. lat., and is in the Kumusi Division. Kororo, Mount Victory, is an active volcano, nearly 5000 feet in height, a little to the west of Cape Nelson, which is about 9° S. lat.

[158] [2] "Kava-Keva" is a Motuan word which is used extensively throughout the tribes of British New Guinea by adoption to express a condition of madness or irresponsibility either temporary or permanent.